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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

University Communications
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May 13, 1994

UM HOSTS NATIONALLY TELEVISED CLASS, THANKS TO \$1 MILLION GIFT

MISSOULA --

Author Tom McGuane and 20 rural Montana high school students gathered on the University of Montana campus Wednesday, May 11, as part of a nationwide interactive television venture fueled by a \$1 million gift to UM.

The program, seen via satellite and on the Mind Extension University cable channel, kicked off a partnership between Achievement Television and the UM School of Education's new Academy for Curriculum Leadership and Technology. The ACLT, launched by a gift from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation, is a center for curriculum innovation.

Each month during the academic year, ATV presents interactive televised courses that enable students throughout the nation to participate in discussions with leading experts in the fields being studied. UM will serve as an origination site for one program each year, bringing Montana students into the televised classroom.

That access to prominent Americans provides an invaluable boost to students' classroom experience, said Phyllis Washington, a UM alumna and former Missoula elementary school teacher.

"When I was teaching, I longed to make accomplishments of the men and women who were making history live for my students," she said. "By bringing Achievement TV to rural areas such as Montana, we can actually introduce our students to their heroes for almost face-to-face communication."

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Wednesday's program, "So, You Want To Be a Writer?," originated from three sites: UM, featuring Montanan McGuane and students from Columbia Falls High School; Oxford, Miss., with author John Grisham; and New York City, with U.S. Poet Laureate Rita Dove, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Susan Sheehan and soap opera writer Agnes Nixon. The writers shared stories and suggestions for aspiring authors, fielding questions from students in the studios and from viewers who called in during the live program.

UM's Academy for Curriculum Leadership and Technology will develop nationally distributed curricular materials for Achievement TV broadcasts and shape existing ATV programs into lesson plans.

The Washingtons' gift to UM is part of the University's \$40 million capital campaign, "Ensuring a Tradition of Excellence." The Washingtons have strong ties to UM and to the goals of Achievement TV. Dennis Washington is chairman of the board of the American Academy of Achievement, ATV's parent organization, and Phyllis Washington is national chairwoman for UM's capital campaign.

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